

16 substituted therefore, claim 6 has been amended and claims 17 -30 have been added. Claims 2 and 5 also have been amended to correct dependency.

The Background of the Invention section of the specification has been amended to more accurately describe the understanding of those skilled in the art, and other amendments to the specification have been made to correct stylistic and typographic errors.

At page 1, line 19 the definition of signing a message has been slightly rephrased. And at page 6, line 1 the minimum rate of increase of computational time with the order of the operands for the computation to be considered hard has been restated. (Note that the preferred rate remains unchanged.) Applicant respectfully submits that these changes do no more than reflect the knowledge of those skilled in the cryptographic art and particularly those skilled in elliptic curve encryption and that the original specification would have been so understood by those of such skill; and that, therefore these changes do not constitute new matter.

Other amendments to the specification have been made primarily to assure consistency of notation and terminology.

Claims 14 - 16 have been substituted for claims 1, 8 and 9, also primarily to assure consistent notation and terminology and no substantive change is believed to have been made.

Claim 6 has been amended to correct the reference to the meter public key. Support for this amendment is found in the specification a page 16, lines 15 - 20.

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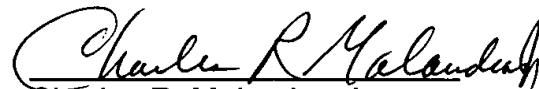
Added claims 1- 24 are directed to an embodiment of the invention wherein user station generates and downloads private keys to postage meters. Support for these claims is found in the specification at page 17, line 5 - page 19, line 13.

Added claims 25 - 27 are directed to signing of a postal indicium in accordance with the subject invention. Support for these claims is found in the specification at page 19, line 15 - page 22, line 6.

Added claims 28 - 30 are directed to verification of a postal indicium in accordance with the subject invention. Support for these claims is found in the specification at page 22, line 7 - page 23, line 2

Applicant submits that all claims, as amended, are in condition for allowance and an early allowance of all claims is respectfully solicited.

Respectfully submitted,


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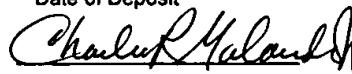
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